

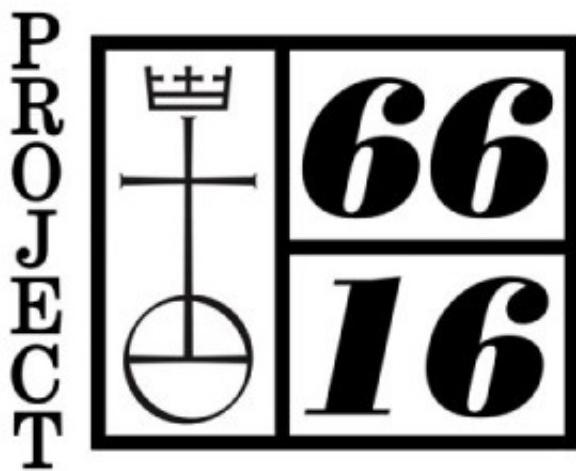
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# **Project 66-16 Special, Part One: The Fifteen Traditions of the Southeast Conference**

**NOTE:** Mike Stroud, director of the Project 66-16 history initiative of the Conference, was unable to present a workshop scheduled during the 2014 Annual Meeting due to a circumstance beyond his and the Conference's control. In lieu of that, he will give his presentation on the website, in two installments. Here is the first part.



In analyzing the past of our Southeast Conference and its forebears prior to the founding of the UCC, here is a group of categories that we believe provides the most appropriate framework to tell the story of our complex, rich heritage as expressed through local church life. Some of the categories by their very nature, or by present conditions, overlap with one another, while others are quite exclusive. Some of them are very much a living part of our witness and mission today, while others belong largely, and in one case entirely, to the past. Whatever one makes of these classifications, they do seek to reflect concrete

communities of faith that both actively shaped, and still shape, their surrounding cultures and, in turn, bore marks of conditioning by the same times and places. This “sorting” helps the narrative of the

Conference's story make better sense than separate, individual congregational histories alone would, in other words.

**1) African-American Congregationalism**—those churches founded directly or indirectly (via dissent within black Methodism) by the American Missionary Association prior to 1931. Their heritage of producing strong community leaders (lay and clergy) and association with prestigious colleges and universities has been celebrated by the UCC in recent times (e.g., the Conference's "Rekindle the Gift" initiative in the early 2000s that led to the publication of *On the Heels of Freedom*, written by then-Associate Conference Minister Joyce Hollyday in 2005).

CHURCHES:

**King's Chapel Congregational, Alpine, Alabama**  
**Trinity Congregational, Athens, Alabama**  
**First Congregational, Birmingham, Alabama**  
**First Congregational, Marion, Alabama**  
**First Congregational Christian, Montgomery, Alabama**  
**First Congregational, Talladega, Alabama**  
**First Congregational, Atlanta, Georgia**  
**Rush Memorial Congregational, Atlanta, Georgia**  
**Evergreen Congregational, Beachton, Georgia**  
**Congregational, Midway, Georgia**  
**First Congregational, Savannah, Georgia**  
**Bethany Congregational, Thomasville, Georgia**  
**Union, Tougaloo, Mississippi**  
**Howard Congregational, Nashville, Tennessee**

**2) Afro-centric Christian**—African-American congregations founded after 1931 (the date of the Congregational and Christian union), whether new church developments or churches affiliating with the UCC that came from other traditions. These tend toward worship and organizational styles much closer to the general African-American revivalist norm than do the AMA Congregationalists mentioned above.

CHURCHES:

**Community Congregational, Montgomery, Alabama**  
**Unity UCC, Montgomery, Alabama**  
**Sankofa UCC, Atlanta, Georgia**  
**Victory, Stone Mountain, Georgia**  
**First UCC, Sweetwater, Tennessee**

**3) Appalachian Congregationalism**—churches established by the American Missionary Association

for poor whites in eastern Tennessee and southeastern Kentucky in the late 19th century. These were usually attached to schools that were supplanted by the founding of public education in these isolated rural areas.

CHURCHES:

**Congregational, Deer Lodge, Tennessee**

**Community, Pleasant Hill, Tennessee**

**4) Christian Connection**—churches descended from the evangelistic work of W.M.J. Elder and other ministers propounding the platform of Christian unity originally devised by James O'Kelly to residents of the Chattahoochee Valley of Alabama and Georgia. By the mid-20th century, these churches were little different theologically or socially from their largely Baptist and Methodist neighbors.

CHURCHES:

**United Congregational Christian, Columbus, Georgia**

**Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain, Georgia**

**5) Congregational Methodism**—churches in parts of rural Alabama and Georgia that were persuaded to join the Congregational Churches in the late 19th century; these practiced a comparatively primitivist version of Wesleyan revivalism. Although generally located in different areas of Alabama and Georgia than the Christian Connection (see above), they appealed largely to the same agricultural/low-skilled worker constituency.

CHURCHES:

**Liberty Congregational Christian, Brantley, Alabama**

**New Hope Congregational Christian, Clio, Alabama**

**Jones Chapel Congregational Christian, Woodbury, Georgia**

**6) Emergent/Postmodern Christian**—churches that have embraced worship forms and theology distinct from older liberal and conservative Protestants, with a strong emphasis on youth, modern musical styles, and non-dogmatic but socially conscious theology and a pronounced emphasis upon discipleship.

CHURCHES:

**Praxis UCC, Americus, Georgia**

**Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta, Georgia**

**Praxis UCC, Atlanta, Georgia**

**7) Euro-American new church starts**—churches formed after 1957 that appeal primarily to the same constituency as Euro-American Congregationalism (see below), but usually emphasize more theological

diversity than in the past.

CHURCHES:

**United, Huntsville, Alabama**  
**Sandy Creek UCC, LaFayette, Alabama**  
**Open Table UCC, Mobile, Alabama**  
**UCC, Pensacola, Florida**  
**Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, Georgia**  
**Peace Congregational, Clemson, South Carolina**  
**Emmanuel UCC, Greenville, South Carolina**  
**United, Cookeville, Tennessee**  
**Community, Fairfield Glade, Tennessee**

**8) Evangelical and Reformed**—the four congregations founded by German and Swiss immigrants in Alabama and Tennessee that came to the SEC by way of the South Indiana Synod. They were mostly supportive of the UCC as an institution but usually had misgivings or outright opposition to certain theological and political stances.

CHURCHES:

**First United, Belvidere, Tennessee**  
**First United (Evangelical and Reformed), Nashville, Tennessee**

**9) Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Christian**—churches with a ministry predominantly or exclusively serving the needs of the GLBTQ community at their inception. These may vary significantly in terms of theology and mission stances. Most if not all were previously existing churches, that joined the UCC as previously independent communities, although some may have been affiliated in the past with denominations such as the Metropolitan Community Churches.

CHURCHES:

**Covenant Community, Center Point, Alabama**  
**Restoration Inclusive Ministries, Decatur, Georgia**  
**UCC, Decatur, Georgia**  
**Safe Harbor Family, Flowood, Mississippi**  
**Garden of Grace UCC, Columbia, South Carolina**  
**Holy Trinity Community, Nashville, Tennessee**  
**Phoenix Christian, Wildersville, Tennessee**

**10) Korean Christian**—churches founded by either first-generation Korean immigrants or subsequent Korean-Americans as alternatives to the historically fundamentalist, authoritarian Korean Protestant (namely Presbyterian) tradition.

CHURCH:**Open Community, Atlanta, Georgia**

**11) Liberal Euro-American Congregationalism**—churches either founded by Northern transplants to Southern cities or towns or as schisms within established Southern congregations, prior to the 1957 that brought the UCC into being. These churches' memberships are typically highly educated and politically liberal (or else libertarian) as well as relatively affluent.

CHURCHES:**Pilgrim UCC, Birmingham, Alabama****Central Congregational, Atlanta, Georgia****Methodist-Congregational Federated, Demorest, Georgia****Pilgrim Congregational, Chattanooga, Tennessee****Church of the Savior, Knoxville, Tennessee****Brookmeade Congregational, Nashville, Tennessee**

**12) Liberal Southern Baptist**—churches formerly affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and holding simultaneous affiliation with the Alliance of Baptists. Otherwise, they bear strong resemblances to several of the other liberal-oriented traditions mentioned.

CHURCHES:**Virginia-Highland, Atlanta, Georgia****Church of the Savior, Roswell, Georgia**

**13) Multi-cultural Christian**—churches begun to intentionally bridge historical cultural divides among Euro- and African-Americans and/or other ethnic groups. These tend toward a contemporary worship style and non-traditional forms of mission activity.

CHURCH:**Beloved Community, Birmingham, Alabama**

**14) Puritanism**—Congregational/Independent Presbyterian churches that were planted in South Carolina and Georgia by settlers and evangelists from New England in the 17th and 18th centuries. All except one of them became Presbyterian before the Civil War in light of developing Congregational sympathy for abolitionism. The movement also included the work of the Brainerd Mission in Georgia and Tennessee among American Indians.

CHURCH:**Circular Congregational, Charleston, South Carolina**

**15) Welsh Congregationalism**—two churches north of Chattanooga, Tennessee founded by immigrants from Wales who worked as coal miners. These churches went out of operation as their members assimilated into the larger community in the late 20th century.

### NO CHURCHES PRESENTLY IN OPERATION

**For more on Project 66-16, visit these two websites, featuring documents and photos from the early 20th century up to today:**

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